

## Stefan Ritterman (1904–1970)

Stefan Ritterman was born on the 31<sup>st</sup> of May 1904 in Cracow. His father Izydor was a bookkeeper, while his mother, Maria née Dawidowicz, worked as a barrister's clerk. The first significant stage in the education of the future Jagiellonian University professor was at the well-known Cracow King Jan Sobieski Secondary School, founded in 1883 to mark the two hundredth anniversary of the relief of Vienna. After obtaining his school leaving certificate in 1922 he initially started a degree in medicine at the Jagiellonian University's Faculty of Medicine but in 1923 he was to change his course of study, becoming a student of the university's Faculty of Law. He finished his four years of study in 1927 with an MA.

His all round abilities are borne out by the fact that he completed musical studies at the Musical Society's Conservatory in Cracow as well as speaking three foreign languages fluently – Russian, German and French.

After completing his degree he started his career to become a judge. In September 1928 he was appointed a judicial understudy, while in 1931 he passed his judging examination. The further course of his judicial service shows the extent to which he was valued in his work. In 1932 he became a judicial assessor, in 1933 a judge in Liszki near Cracow, then a judge in Warsaw, a post he was to hold until the outbreak of World War II.

He was to simultaneously continue his education and academic work. In 1929 he gained his Ph.D. in Penal Law at the Jagiellonian University for the academic study *Usiłowanie dobrowolnie zaniechane a czynny żal* [Voluntarily Abandonment of attempted crime versus active remorse] as well as compound examinations in law and the criminal process as the main subject and civil law with international private law as the auxiliary.

After being awarded his doctorate he continued his academic activities in the field of law on non-substantive possessions. Of especial note is *Komentarz do ustawy o prawie autorskim* [Commentary to the act on copyright], published in 1937, and considered by contemporaries as one of the two most important commentaries to this act.

In 1938 he married the barrister Dr. Maria Stern.

After the German attack on Poland in September 1939 he left Warsaw along with his wife and headed to the eastern territories of the Polish Republic – to Lvov. For the Nazi invader he constituted a double enemy: firstly as a so-called ‘racial enemy,’ and secondly – as a representative of the Polish intellectual elite. The Polish intelligentsia was to become with the incursion of the occupier the target of persecution and planned execution within the framework of the so-called *Intelligenzaktion*, this being the planned destruction and extermination of the leading sections of Polish society, the intelligentsia and the Polish cultural elite.

In Lvov the Rittermans were to meet with the typical fate for the Polish intelligentsia in the Eastern Polish Borderlands (*Kresy*). On the strength of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, the Soviet Union attacked Poland on the 17<sup>th</sup> of September 1939. Poland was to be erased from the map on the basis of the agreement between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, and its lands divided; with the Eastern Borderlands occupied by the Soviet Union.

For the Polish intelligentsia on these territories this meant being deemed a class enemy with its ensuing repression, exile, resettlement or direct extermination. In 1940 Stefan Ritterman together with his wife was transported beyond the Urals.

The situation was to change on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June 1941 when the Third Reich attacked the USSR. Polish-Soviet relations were regulated in the Sikorski-Majski agreement of July 1941. For Polish citizens this meant the end of repression. In an additional protocol the parties agreed that the government of the USSR would guarantee an ‘amnesty’ for Polish citizens. This was to equally cover the Rittermans. As a result S. Ritterman was freed from a labour camp and, after a short stay at Achyt near Sverdlovsk, the Rittermans settled in Kant near Frunze in the Kirghiz Soviet Socialist Republic.

His musical abilities and knowledge of his father’s trade were to turn out to be extremely useful in these difficult conditions. Stefan Ritterman worked

as a musician, choir leader and bookkeeper at a sugar plant. He taught the piano and singing. The significance of these skills for survival is impossible to overestimate. Food was in short supply, there was rationing and rations were only given to those in employment.

In May 1946 the Rittersmans returned to Poland within the repatriation programme and settled in Szczecin. On returning Stefan took up another judicial post, at first in a magistrate's court, then as a district judge and finally at the court of appeals. In 1949 on his own request he was freed from judicial service as he really wanted to devote himself purely to academia. From the 1<sup>st</sup> of November 1950 he was employed as an lecturer at the Department of Civil Law at the Faculty of Law of the Jagiellonian University. In 1956 he was appointed assistant professor while from 1954 he was head of the Department and Institute of Agricultural Law. This was connected with the fact that at this stage in his academic work he had undertaken research into agricultural and cooperative law, publishing several important academic works. In the monograph *Kierownictwo państwowe i spółdzielczościowe a granice samorządu rolniczych spółdzielni produkcyjnych* (Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków 1967) [State and cooperative-union management and the borders of self-government for agricultural productive cooperatives] he advanced the need for a new discipline – the study of agricultural law which would go 'beyond the possibilities of fundamental disciplines.' He presented in this work a connected analysis of legal institutions from the field of civil and administrative law involved in agriculture as a result of serving a common socio-economic aim and which should consequently be researched in their mutual relations.

Knowledge and varied interests did not allow S. Ritterman to limit himself to only the above mentioned branch of law, proof of which can be seen in an extensive work on the theory of law and civil law entitled *Pojęcia materialne w prawie cywilnym. Studium z zakresu metodologii nauki prawa cywilnego. Rozważania ogólne* [Material concepts in civil law. A study into the methodology of civil law instruction. General considerations]. Its aim was to go beyond 'the elements contained within the very content of norms' and more broadly those within the academic referring to the basis of social norms. An interesting story is connected with the writing and publication of this work. It was already ready in 1956, having been positively evaluated by Prof. Tadeusz Kotarbiński it was to go to print. But then Stefan Ritterman admitted that the work needed elaborating on, which he also did, supplementing it with an additional 200 pages. The publication was evaluated as a creative contribution in the field of the methodology of the Polish legal sciences, while in reviews the originality and erudition of the author were emphasised (Gwiazdomorski). Stefan Ritterman was to continue equally to publish works on copyright law.

Stefan Ritterman (from 1954 to 1956 and 1959–1960) was twice vice-dean at the Jagiellonian University's Faculty of Law. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 1965 he was appointed associate professor. He also acted as editor for the legal section of the publishing series *Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego*.

In 1969 he wrote to ask to retire, motivating his request as follows:

On the 31<sup>st</sup> of May 1969 I turned 65. I have been in state service for over 40 years, including around 20 at the University, around 15 in the Polish judiciary and 6 in various institutions in the USSR during the course of the war (as a manual labourer, musician, bookkeeper). Around a year ago, my only child, Jerzy, emigrated to Israel. This separation has become impossible to bear for parents who lost almost their entire families at the hands of the Nazis. Consequently my wife and I have decided to also move permanently to Israel in order to be with our son. Therefore, on the basis of the above I most sincerely ask for the Minister to allow me to take formally early retirement.

The motives for leaving Poland cannot be explained without recourse to the broader political and social context. The events of March 1968 in communist Poland and the support on the part of the intellectual and cultural elites for the protesting young people resulted in a reaction on the part of the authorities. For political purposes there was no hesitation in resorting to anti-Semitic campaigns. As a result, a series of eminent artists and academics left Poland, with Aleksander Peczenik (the philosopher of law) and Jan Górecki (the civil law scholar) leaving the Jagiellonian University besides S. Ritterman.

Professor S. Ritterman died on the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 1970 in Israel.

His academic output comprised numerous publications on copyright, agricultural, civil and cooperative law. To this day these are works cited in publications on the above mentioned legal disciplines.

## Bibliography

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